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THE AWAKENING OF CHINA.*

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NOTHING can be more fascinating than the stirring of new life in a great nation or group of nations. The Crusades belong to the Heroic Age of Europe, when a common impulse of faith and adventure swept over Latin Christendom and precipitated great armies of Europeans upon the Holy Land and the East, and sent a reflex wave of superior culture and widening horizons over the new nations of the West. The Reformation of the sixteenth century was the awakening of Europe to new thoughts and life and hope, and called out heroic deeds and movements of deepest import among the nations. No part of English history is so attractive, reveals the greatness of the people so clearly, or gave to English institutions so sure a hold upon liberty and righteousness, as the epoch of the Puritan Revolution. That greatest of modern states is still living in the strength of those heroic days. A new sense of national unity, consecrated to liberty, sprang into quick and conscious being in the war for the Union and is still the dominant note in our national life.

During the last thirty years, Japan has emerged, or, come forth from its seclusion, put off its outworn institutions, renewed its life and set out on a national career full of noble aspirations and of wonderful resources. And the spectacle has commanded the admiring attention of the civilized world. In spite of events in Europe and America of the deepest import and the most surprising sweep, this Sunrise Empire has held the eyes and fascinated the thoughts of the nations, and has found a frank and hearty welcome as she has sued for a place in the circle of the great Powers of the age.

* This article is based upon a visit to China made by the author during the past year.

And now, after the sleep of centuries, we look upon the awakening of China, the stir of new life among her rulers, the impact of new forces upon her social and intellectual institutions. It has been long in coming, many obstacles have been encountered, many more yet remain to be overcome; but the crisis is at hand, and the movement has begun. The forces that have wrought to this end have come from many sources, some without, some within; they have worked without collusion, without mutual recognition, but they have conspired to one end.

The contact and encroachment of foreign powers by commerce and by war; the travels and studies of leading Chinese in foreign lands; the natural effects of freer diplomatic intercourse with other nations; the long, widely spread, persistent and increasing influence of Western missionaries, teaching, embodying and exemplifying their faith and mental culture and spiritual life; these, and things like these, have wrought their work and reinforced each other, and made a steadily deepening impression upon the mind and heart of this vast people. And, at last, the war with Japan, so brilliantly successful on the one side, so humiliating and stunning on the other side, made further inaction impossible, let loose the convictions slowly gathering strength, and demonstrated that new ideas, new forces, new modes of life, must come or the nation sink in ruin. The shock, though rude, was necessary and wholesome, and we are looking upon its first results.

It would be folly to say that all the attention now given to China and the unfolding of her destiny is disinterested; obviously the great powers of Europe are more bent on making their own fortunes than on aiding China in her need, on guarding their own standing and future than on maintaining any interest of China. Nevertheless, the spectacle of China's awakening, which is an open fact, commands the eyes and thoughts of Europe and America. Even though the movement is at the beginning and it is still doubtful whether the Celestial Empire can retain her autonomy and independent development, we cannot turn away our eyes, or draw off our thoughts, or cease to speculate, to hope, to fear, as we consider what issues are involved and what the outcome may be.

This world-wide interest is only just and natural. When we remember the territory involved, more than four million square miles, fronting the sea by a coast line of three thousand miles,

within the temperate zone, of singular variety, fertility and resources; when we recall the people, four hundred millions of souls, one-fourth of the human race, a people of great powers, noble history and rare endurance; when we note these things, it is not strange that our minds are fascinated as the destiny of this great land and people unfolds before our very eyes. No drama of deeper meaning or wider interest has ever been enacted on the great stage of the world's history, and in few has the stake of other nations been so great.

The political elements that enter into the movement are only a part of the whole; the question at issue is not simply who is to possess the soil and rule the people of China. What are the Chinese to become, what part are they to play in the future, what share are they to have in the life and intercourse and thoughts of coming ages? It were strange, indeed, if questions like these were not to stir our hearts and touch our minds with an enduring interest. For the nations of the earth have a common life, and share a common destiny. No nation liveth to itself, and no nation dieth to itself. It deeply concerns America, England, Russia, Germany, France, what becomes of China and her hundreds of millions; in truth, these nations, severally and together, have no small share in determining the fortunes of this oriental world.

Many things conspire to show that the old order is changing, that a new life is rising in this land of seeming stagnation and death. Some of them are due to outside forces acting upon the government or the people, some spring from within, from new thoughts and hopes that agitate the foremost minds of the land. First among these, we note the opening railways in different parts of the Empire. The time is not remote when the effort to lay a railway in China was met by popular uprising and the complete demolition of everything connected with the enterprise. But that time is forever past, and the hand of the imperial government would sternly crush any popular attack upon the railways now building or in actual operation. A road three hundred miles in length, from Peking to Tientsin and thence to the sea, and to extensive coal mines in the northeast, has been built for some years, runs many trains a day and carries thousands of passengers, native and foreign. A line connecting with this, from Peking to Paoting-fu, a hundred and ten miles, has just been completed and put into operation. Shanghai is now connected with its sea-

port, Woosung, by rail. Many other lines are projected, and some of them are sure to be built; from Paoting-fu eight hundred miles southward to Hankow, an interior trunk line, connecting the capital with the rich and populous valley of the Yang-tse-Kiang; from Hankow nine hundred miles southward a continuation of the trunk line from Peking to Canton through the very heart of the Empire; from Paoting-fu some five hundred miles westward to the vast coal measures and iron mines of Shansi, giving these mineral riches access to the sea and to many other provinces; from Tientsin five hundred miles southeastward to Chin Kiang, traversing the fertile and crowded province of Shantung; from Peking three hundred miles northeast to New Chwang, connecting with the great Russian transcontinental line. It is foreign capital that is building these extensive lines; but the Chinese government favors the enterprises and forbids popular molestation. Nothing indicates more sensibly the awakening of the nation, nothing aids and intensifies it more directly. The straight lines of the iron road will compel a readjustment and limitation of the almost omnipresent cemeteries of China, and will pay small respect to the sensibilities of the Dragon god outstretched beneath the ground; the shriek of the whistle, the roar of the trains, will break effectually the sleep of ages, and will set the pulses of the people beating to new feelings and purposes; travel will widen the thoughts of men, and correct ignorance and cement a real unity of life and interest between all parts of the land. The navigation by steam craft of the great interior waterways of China, which is already revolutionizing passenger traffic and the transportation of freight, still further serves the same purpose, and belongs to the same order of things.

Closely related to this quickening of communication is the introduction of manufactures and mining operations. A half-dozen cotton mills, in dimensions like those of Lowell and Manchester, running with full power night and day, are already in operation at Shanghai, a significant beginning of new industries in the Empire. An Anglo-Italian syndicate has obtained a concession for exploiting the vast coal measures and iron mines of Shansi; and the railway projected thence to Paoting-fu will carry their products to the markets of the world. Foreign capital and enterprise are also occupied with these undertakings; but they create a great demand for native labor, they will multiply the

rewards of labor and the comforts of life on a wide scale; they are an incessant assault upon ignorance, and a spur to mental activity and life. That they can exist at all is clear proof that a new spirit has come over the land; their continued existence and growth must shatter superstition in its very centres and give the nation a forward impulse.

A second interesting fact is the appearance of schools of high grade, recognized, if not supported, by the government, in which English is taught, and Western science and history form a part of the curriculum. The Imperial University at Tientsin is an example, where the president and two of the professors are Americans, and where two hundred and fifty students are gathered from many parts of the Empire, and subjected to a discipline essentially the same as that which is given in the colleges of our land. A school of high grade for Chinese girls has recently been organized at Shanghai, where English and science will be taught, with a foreign lady as principal and missionary ladies in the Board of Counsel. These schools are of recent origin, and denote the heightened esteem in which the outside world is held, and are the open windows through which the light of the world's best culture and civilization is streaming in.

Another interesting sign of the times, closely related to this, is the desire for Western learning, and the growth in the number of educated Chinese who are reading Western books. It is well known that the Emperor has ordered to be brought to the palace everything published by the mission presses in the Empire—the Bible, school books in science and history, and other specimens of the world's literature—and that he has read these books. Not a few of the men high in government circles are seeking eagerly for the knowledge which the literature of the world conveys, and are keeping pace with the progressive thought of the times. Even in the anti-foreign province of Hunan officials are found who are caught with the new learning and are eager to explore its treasures and gather its fruits. There is actively at work in China to-day a society for the diffusion of Christian and general literature, translating into Chinese the best things in the literature of the world and circulating them widely among the learned and official class. Its sales are already very considerable, and they are steadily increasing. And a new sentiment toward the outside world, toward government and education, and life itself, is springing up

wherever these fertilizing streams are flowing. This is an agency of revolution and improvement of the very first importance.

The edicts of reform issued within the year by the Emperor are perhaps the most striking evidence of the reality and character of the awakening that is abroad in the land. They indicate remarkable insight into the causes of China's weakness, and equally remarkable courage in applying the needed remedy. The new regulations in regard to government examinations made an absolute revolution in the educational and intellectual standards of the country. Hereafter every candidate for a government degree, all who ever expect to have a share in the government of the Empire, must sustain an examination in the sciences and history of Western nations. This at once created the necessity of schools to teach these branches. A central university is to be opened at Peking, under two presidents, one a Chinese, the other Dr. Martin, many years a missionary of the American Methodist Board. Dr. Martin is charged with the duty of finding teachers for the new subjects and of directing the work of instruction. He must bring in at once twenty or more highly educated foreigners, either missionaries or men of like culture and sentiments. The best men trained in our mission colleges will be in great demand as teachers in the affiliated schools all over the Empire. Temples are to be placed at the service of these secondary schools, the priests to be turned adrift, and government fees support the schools. In all this we have the public recognition that Chinese learning as heretofore regarded is found wanting, and that the learning that thrives in the Occident, which has yielded Japan such resources, which the missionaries have embodied and taught for many decades, must hereafter be the light and mainstay of this mighty nation.

The enforced resignation or imprisonment of the Emperor who sent out this edict will not entirely abolish it or strip it of its power. The Empress, though a powerful woman and the head of the conservative influence, is not believed to be strong enough permanently to arrest this new and progressive force, even if she really desired to do so. The nation is astir with the movement from Burmah to the Great Wall, from the ocean to the Hindoo-Koosh, and the old order can never return.

Other progressive edicts are equally aimed at deficiencies in the political, economical and intellectual conditions of the

land, and propose appropriate remedies. It is marvelous that the Emperor, trained and surrounded as he has been, was led to see these things, to conceive the needed corrections, and actually to give them the support of imperial edicts. Had he measured the forces necessary to carry his plans into effect as wisely as he discerned the needs of the Empire, and had he provided the supports of the new order as skillfully as he applied the needful remedies, he must have led a splendid and successful national transformation. Even as it is, it may be safely said that he has struck out the path that reform must take, if the Empire retains its unity and life.

An editorial in the *North China Herald*,* gives a succinct summary of these decrees, and points out the striking fact, which most writers have failed to discern, that every one of them has respect to a radical weakness of China and proposes the true remedy, that no selfish or personal aim attaches to any one of them, but that they seek the public welfare in ways of high intelligence and wide vision. They are not more radical changes than have occurred in recent Japanese history, and if they could have been steadily put into operation the Empire would have reaped a great and lasting advantage. And it is not clear yet that some of the most important changes will not be effected at once, and others, in part at least, after no long delay. Whatever happens, two things have occurred full of significance and hope. A Chinese Emperor has shown himself capable of taking bold and well considered steps toward the thorough modernizing of his government and people. He was supported in these things by a band of the most enlightened and capable of his subjects, who have suffered temporary disabilities with him for their patriotic purposes. A wide and influential circle of men in official positions have sympathized with his aims, and still desire to see the nation guided along these paths of reform. Their numbers and their courage are astonishing, considering the past history of China, and they create a great hope for the future. The reaction that has set in does not represent the best or most vigorous elements in the nation, and it cannot long hold its own. It takes counsel of the fears and superstitions of the people, not of their hopes and aspirations, and it is essentially weak. As Athanasius said of the violent reaction of Julian the Apostate against the new-born Christian faith of the

* October 31, 1898, Shanghai.

Roman Empire, so we may say of the *coup d'état* which has put the Empress Dowager temporarily in power: *Nebeacula est, transibit*. Meanwhile, the capacity of the Chinese to conceive and put into execution great measures of reform has been demonstrated beyond question or doubt.

One additional source and evidence of China's awakening is found in the spread and success of missionary work. This is a liberalizing influence of incessant and unmeasured activity; it is exerted on large numbers, mainly the youth, in all grades of society from the lowest upward, and over a great extent of country. It is a training in knowledge and virtue, according to the world's highest ideals, under conditions favorable for deep and lasting results. It is a leaven cast into the bosom of society, not for a day or a year, but for generation after generation, slowly but surely leavening the whole mass. It reaches further and penetrates deeper, and abides more permanently than any merely external influence. By its very nature the Christian society tends to increase and gather strength, and overcome opposing strength, and become the controlling and inspiring force. Already at not a few points this potent social influence is in the ascendant, in many others it is steadily advancing to the supremacy. There are no minds so eager for the best things, so devoted to the nation's welfare, so proud of China's true glory or so able to lead her on to win and possess it, as those which have been trained in the mission churches and schools from one end of the land to the other. In these centres of aggressive life new China has her camps, her captains and her soldiers of the line. They are making ready to do for her what the churches and schools of Canterbury and Winchester, of London and Oxford, of Lincoln and York, did for England in the seventh and eighth centuries. Any study of China at the present time that leaves these out of the account fails to grasp the whole problem.

Nothing could be more interesting or more important, as revealing the motives and development of the political drama enacted in Peking during the last six months, than a recently reported interview with one of the leaders of the Reform party, Kang Yu Wei, who was fortunate enough to escape the fate which overtook his associates, and reached Hong Kong in safety, where this interview was given. This young Cantonese, well educated, deeply imbued with Western learning and with the ideas of re-

form, belongs to a group of educated Chinese of official rank which has for some time been studying the history and institutions of the outside world, and favoring measures of reform. He has had free access to the person of the Emperor, has conferred with the Emperor about the needs of China, the improvement of the administration and the necessity of important changes. He has, at the Emperor's request, memorialized the throne from time to time on these subjects, and set forth at length practical measures for the betterment of the government and the increase of China's power. He and those for whom he has spoken have gained the confidence of the Emperor, and have encouraged and shaped his growing purpose to reform the government and put China by the side of other nations.

The edicts lately issued by the Emperor, which have betrayed so clear a sense of China's weakness, so sure an instinct of the true path of reform, have embodied many of the points included in these conferences and memorials. The Emperor was taking steps to emancipate himself from the control of the Empress Dowager, to dismiss the old and conservative ministers, who, with the Empress, wished to throttle all attempts at reform, and to call into service younger and progressive men, who would co-operate with him in allying China with the civilization of the West. The substitution of Western science and history for the Confucian classics in the government schools and in the examinations for degrees, may have been prematurely attempted; but it was a magnificent ideal, and applied a radical remedy to the political evils of the Empire. In the intellectual world it is what the railway is in the physical world, the death blow of superstition, the powerful stimulus of progressive life and thought, the open channel of a new national life, and a vital bond between the Celestial Empire and the civilization of the world.

This interview sets Kang Yu Wei before us as a wise student, a far-sighted statesman and a true patriot; he seems to have cherished no personal aims in all his plans, but to have sought his nation's deliverance and strength. The Emperor is also disclosed in an attractive light, as discerning the weakness and needs of the Empire, as seeing how these are to be overcome, and as heartily welcoming the benefits which the Western world has to bestow in its arts and sciences, its learning and faith.

The inherent weakness of the throne is revealed by the course

of events, and it is one of the sacredly cherished aims of Kang and those who share his views, to rescue the Emperor from his present thralldom and to help him reorganize the government upon a sounder and more permanent basis. The letters he has received from the Emperor since their last interview, which he makes public, are pathetic and inspiring. If there is any way by which the present dynasty can be made serviceable to China and the Empire saved from decay, it must be through such plans and measures as this reformer cherishes, reinforced, if need be, by the aid of friendly foreign powers.

The Chinese move slowly, and some have mistaken this fact for inability to move at all. But many things combine to show that changes are firmly maintained if once they have been intelligently made. And the process of educating the Chinese mind in the facts and principles of modern life is now going on upon a wide scale. The outcome of the war with Japan has compelled the governing class to inquire into the causes of Japan's victories, and to study the arts and sciences of the West. The multiplication of scholars in the government schools who know English and are thus brought into contact with the life of progressive nations, tends to the same end. Diplomatic intercourse with the great nations of the world is a constant stimulus to wider knowledge and more liberal views. The efforts of the Society for the Diffusion of Christian and General Literature have multiplied the number of readers of Western books in all parts of the Empire. The influence of the various schools and other labors connected with missionary work has wrought silently, widely and steadily to create enlightened views and to introduce modern ideas of manners and laws and life. And a goodly company of men and women around the numerous and widely scattered mission stations is already in active sympathy with these forces that are awakening the thoughts and modernizing the life and institutions of this great Empire. In this respect, as in so many others, the Emperor's thoughts pursued the path of reality and recognized facts, when he contemplated the substitution of Christianity for the state religion, as the mother and cherishing atmosphere of the best life and arts for the nations.

Everyone who considers the matter carefully must be deeply impressed by the evidence here given that the sentiments of reform have so considerable a hold on the educated young men of

China, and that they are animated by a pure patriotism and high personal aims. It is said that the six companions of Kang Yu Wei who have suffered death at the hands of the Empress, all of high rank and position, friendly to reform, familiar with the life and learning of other nations, might have saved themselves if they had preferred life to honor and country. One of them, Kang Kuang Jên, a brother of Kang Yu Wei, being offered protection in a foreign Legation, is reported to have replied: "No reform can succeed but by the shedding of blood; I am ready to die." Their death for devotion to reform and what they deemed the welfare of the nation, sheds a real lustre on the Chinese name, and adds to the common wealth of the world. A cause for which such men are willing to die cannot perish in their destruction; others will arise with the same spirit to take up their cause, and in a happier time, under more favoring conditions, perchance, will see it carried on to victory, as the principles of the Puritan Revolution, which seemed to be overwhelmed in the Restoration under Charles II., under the tyranny of James II., emerged and reasserted themselves, and set the throne of England permanently in harmony with the freedom of the nation and with righteousness.

The friends of China, nay, the friends of liberty and progress in the earth, must desire to see the autonomy of this great people preserved, their government freed from superstition and inherent weakness and adjusted to the new sentiments and relations of these later times, and its future development carried on under a native dynasty. When we consider this remarkable country—its vast extent, its enormous resources, its imperial position; and the people themselves—so numerous, so capable, so industrious, so fitted for great deeds, with a history prolonged through three thousand years; the reformation of their government, the universal spread among them of the best learning and institutions and faith of the world seem things to be ardently desired, freighted with blessings of supreme import to the world and the ages.

JUDSON SMITH.